NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0016 JANUARY 22, 1976
CHARLES MEDD

FORD'S CHOICE FOR LABOR: W.J. USERY

ANNCR:

AS EXPECTED, THE WHITE HOUSE SAYS PRESIDENT FORD WILL NAME WILLIAM J. USERY TO SUCCEED OUTGOING LABOR SECRETARY JOHN DUNLOP. CHARLES MEDD LOOKS AT THE MAN WHOSE NOMINATION THE U.S. SENATE IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE SHORTLY.

VOICE:

PRESIDENT FORD'S VETO OF A CONTROVERSIAL CONSTRUCTION LABOR BILL HAD SOME PREDICTABLE EFFECTS: IT PLEASED THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE REPUBLICAN RIGHT WING, BUT IT ANGERED THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND LED TO THE RESIGNATION OF JOHN DUNLOP, THE MAN WHO HAD SHEPHERDED THE LEGISLATION THROUGH CONGRESS. THE POLITICAL COST OF THAT VETO WAS HIGH ENOUGH, BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHER STILL HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR ONE FACT: THE AVAILABILITY OF WILLIAM J. USERY.

ON THE SURFACE, THERE ARE NO MORE DIFFERENT MEN THAN THE OUTGOING SECRETARY OF LABOR AND HIS NEWLY NAMED REPLACEMENT. JOHN DUNLOP IS AN AUTHOR AND SCHOLAR WHO HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE ON THE HARVARD CAMPUS. BILL USERY COMES FROM THE SOUTHERN STATE OF GEORGIA WHERE HE WAS A WORKINGMAN AND A LONG-TIME OFFICIAL OF THE MACHINISTS UNION. WHAT THE TWO MEN HAVE IN COMMON IS THE ABILITY TO DO BUSINESS WITH BOTH LABOR AND MANAGEMENT, AND TO DO IT IMPARTIALLY.

USERY HAS SHOWN HIS SKILLS TIME AND AGAIN IN HIS CURRENT ROLE AS CHIEF OF THE U.S. MEDIATION SERVICE -- A KIND OF PEACEMAKER WHO RUNS FROM ONE LABOR DISPUTE TO ANOTHER TRYING

TO AVOID COSTLY STRIKES. AS A MEDIATOR, THE FORMER UNION OFFICIAL SEEMED TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH MANAGEMENT WITHOUT LOSING FRIENDS IN LABOR, AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK. AND DESPITE SEVERAL YEARS SERVICE WITH TWO CONSECUTIVE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATIONS, USERY WAS ONCE ASKED BY PRESIDENT GEORGE MEANY OF THE AFL-CIO TO TAKE OVER A TOP LABOR FEDERATION POSITION. MANY THOUGHT IT WAS DESIGNED AS A STEPPING STONE TO THE JOB THE 81-YEAR-OLD MEANY WILL SOMEDAY VACATE.

BILL USERY'S SKILLS AS A MEDIATOR AND HIS TIES WITH ORGANIZED LABOR WILL BE PUT TO A SEVERE TEST ONCE THE SENATE CONFIRMS HIS NOMINATION. AMERICAN LABOR WAS NEVER VERY HAPPY WITH PRESIDENT FORD'S ECONOMIC PROGRAMS, AND WITH THE RECENT WHITE HOUSE VETO THE UNIONS ARE BITTER. THE BREAK-DOWN IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND LABOR MAY BE BEYOND REPAIR, BUT IF THERE'S ONE MAN IN WASHINGTON WITH SOME CHANCE OF RESTORING COMMUNICATIONS, MISTER FORD HAS JUST NAMED HIM.

-0-

GH/PY